

PROCEDURES FOR OPERATING A FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT

A food service plan review is required for all restaurants and food stands involving new or remodeled construction. Plan review for pre-existing buildings is dependent upon the menu and equipment to be used. Plans are reviewed using 15A NCAC 18A .2600, "Rules Governing the Sanitation of Food Service Establishments". The rules can be accessed through the website www.deh.enr.state.nc.us. Fees for restaurants (establishments with seating) are \$250.00 and \$100.00 for food stands (establishments with no seating). There are no fees for mobile food units or pushcarts. **A completed application, the fee, a legible floor plan drawing, menu, and manufacturer's specification sheets on all equipment must be submitted to the Cherokee County Environmental Health Department before plans can be reviewed.**

Plans are reviewed on a first come, first serve basis and the Department will contact you when the review is completed. Upon approval of your plans, you will be given a "Letter of Approval" by the Department. This "Letter of Approval" will need to be submitted to the Cherokee County Building Department in order to obtain your building permits to begin construction. **Food service plans must be reviewed and approved by the Environmental Health Department before building permits can be issued for new construction or remodeling of pre-existing buildings.**

If your food service facility is not on municipal water and/or sewer, you will need to obtain a well permit and septic permit (separate permits) from the Environmental Health Department. The Department strongly recommends that you seek well and septic approval first before proceeding with any other plans for your food service establishment.

All food service equipment used for restaurants, food stands, mobile food units and even pushcarts must meet NSF International listed, Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) Classified for Sanitation or, if not NSF or UL listed/classified, be constructed to meet current NSF/ANSI standards (American National Standards Institute) (rule .2617(d). "Equipment" means refrigeration, including racks and shelving used in refrigeration, utensil cleaning and culinary sinks and drain boards, ware washing and dishwashing machines, food preparation tables, counters, stoves, ovens, and other food preparation and holding appliances (rule .2601). All utensils and equipment, including cooler and freezer shelving units, must be commercial, durable, and constructed of non-toxic and easily cleaned materials. All equipment must have identifiable labels designating the make and model number on the equipment. Equipment not displaying make and model numbers is not ANSI approved and therefore cannot be approved for usage in North Carolina food handling establishments. Hand lavatories, microwaves, toasters, and mixers are excluded from these standards and may be of domestic nature. However, food processors, blenders, and crock-pots are NOT exempt and must meet ANSI standards.

The following will need to be included on your floor plan drawing:

-All equipment including refrigerators (see note at end), freezers, cooking equipment, hot/cold holding equipment, self service buffet bars, utensil washing sinks, food prep sinks, hand sinks, dish machines, air-drying spaces, food prep areas, ice machines, dry storage, waitress/beverage stations (including self-serve), chemical and personal storage areas, hot water heater and can wash locations, mop/broom storage areas, garbage dumpster location, restrooms, dining areas and door entrances. Be sure to label all equipment on your plan.

The following will help you to decide what type of equipment you will need to have so you can begin your floor plan drawing:

-If multi-use utensils are used, then you must have at least a 3-compartment sink OR a dish machine and a 2-compartment sink. Dish machines must have two drain boards (soiled and clean) and also a countersunk sink for pre-cleaning. If single service only is used (take-out) then you must have at least a 2-compartment sink. Drain boards must be present at both ends on all utility washing sinks and must be contiguous with the sink itself. No attachable drain boards are permitted.

-If you will be washing vegetables, a separate vegetable prep sink with at least one drain board (contiguous with the sink) will be required.

-If you will be washing and/or thawing meats, poultry, or seafood in a sink basin then a separate meat prep sink with at least one drain board (contiguous with the sink) will be needed.

-A separate hand sink is required in the kitchen/food prep area.

- Indicate the distance between all types of sinks, dishwashers and prep areas on your plan. Equipment placed less than 18 inches apart may require installation of a splash-guard if cross contamination is an issue. A reasonable distance should be maintained between heavy equipment (ex. ovens/grills/fryers) for cleaning purposes unless the equipment is on castors.

-Lighting (types) for the kitchen/storage areas/prep areas must be designated in the application or on the floor plan.

-All stationary storage shelving must be a minimum of 12" off the floor. Shelving equipped with castors must be a minimum of 6" off the floor. Designate all shelving types in the application or on your floor plan.

-The hot water heater will be sized in GPH or GPM Recovery Rate at 100-degree rise. Designate your water heater type (gas/electric/tankless) on your application. If you wish to have an electric water heater with storage capacity you will need to provide the dimensions (LWH) of one compartment of your utility washing sink, in cubic inches in order to calculate your water heater size. Show the water heater location on the floor plan.

-If you are providing seating for customers you will need to provide public restrooms. When designing your floor plan, take note that customers must not be allowed to pass through the kitchen or have contact with food storage areas when accessing the restrooms. Food stands will only need restrooms for employees. The number of lavatories, toilets and urinals required will be determined by the Cherokee County Building Department.

All new equipment must have manufacturer's specification sheets submitted with your plan review packet. Be sure to circle the model number of the equipment you wish to use since a single specification sheet may contain several model numbers.

All North Carolina State Building Codes must be met.

A NOTE CONCERNING REFRIGERATORS: ALL EQUIPMENT MUST BE USED AS THE MANUFACTURER'S INTENDED PURPOSE. FOR EXAMPLE, MOST GLASS DOOR COOLERS (like the ones you see in convenient stores) ARE CONSIDERED "BEVERAGE COOLERS" AND ARE NOT DESIGNED FOR THE STORAGE OF POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOODS. Most glass door coolers are for the storage of pre-packaged and bottled products only even though the equipment may be ANSI approved. Before you purchase any glass door coolers, be sure you know any limitations that exist with the equipment by the manufacturer or through ANSI.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Kim McClain or Sara Smith at 828-835-3853.